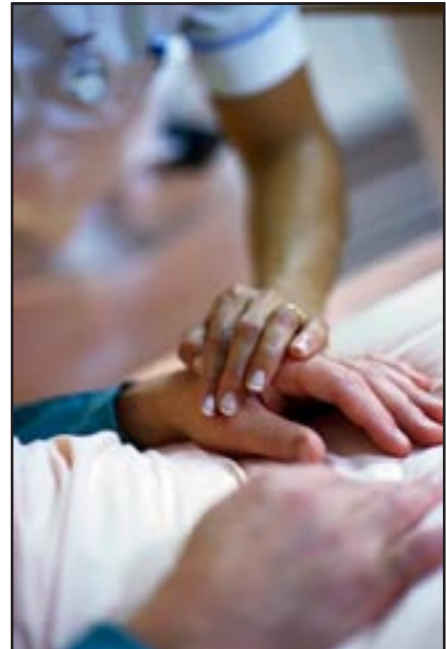


Employee symptom survey results

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As part of the initial visit to each nursing home, the employees were given a symptom survey to complete. The survey included questions about each worker's lifting activity and, for each body area, the frequency and severity of pain, and the pain's interference with work activities during the past three months. The symptom survey is being used as a measure of ergonomic problems because many work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) do not reach the level of severity that would cause workers to report them to their employers for inclusion on the OSHA logs or for filing workers' compensation claims. However, these WMSDs often limit the productivity of the workers and serve as early warnings for more severe WMSD episodes.



Survey responses were received from 751 RNs, LPNs and NARs from 25 nursing homes. As shown in the table below, during the three months prior to the survey, the body parts with the highest percentage of workers experiencing pain or discomfort at least monthly were the lower and upper back and the neck and shoulders, followed by the ankles and feet. The pain or discomfort to these parts interfered with work for less than half the percentage of workers reporting pain or discomfort. The pain, when present, was moderate, severe or unbearable for a significant percentage of workers. However, much smaller percentages of workers sought medical treatment for any condition relating to these body parts during the past three years, and an even smaller percentage filed a workers' compensation claim relating to pain or injury to a body part.

These results show that many more workers have pain than would be indicated by OSHA log or workers' compensation statistics. Attention to worker pain can avert these symptoms from becoming more severe and resulting in time loss.

Symptom survey results for nurses and nursing aides

Body part	In past three months:			In past three years:	
	Pain or discomfort at least weekly	Pain or discomfort interfered with work at least weekly	When present, pain or discomfort is moderate to unbearable	Sought medical treatment for this part	Filed a work comp claim for pain or injury to this part
Neck and shoulders	34.0%	12.7%	39.8%	22.6%	8.1%
Elbows and lower arms	7.9	4.1	9.8	4.3	0.8
Wrists and hands	14.7	6.3	18.7	8.7	3.3
Abdomen and chest	3.6	2.3	7.6	3.1	0.5
Upper back	24.2	10.4	32.5	15.3	4.7
Lower back	43.8	17.8	52.4	28.5	12.7
Hips and thighs	16.2	7.4	19.5	10.0	1.6
Knees and calves	21.8	8.7	24.1	8.0	1.7
Ankles and feet	29.5	11.9	30.9	7.2	1.1